



NEWS RELEASE

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Oct. 7, 2016

District Attorney Jackie Lacey Recognizes Four People for Acts of Selflessness, Bravery

District Attorney Jackie Lacey today commended four Southern California residents for their boldness in helping to apprehend and prosecute dangerous criminals in the communities of Cerritos, Westlake and Torrance.

District Attorney Lacey recognized a college student who came to the aid of a motorcyclist hit by a drunk driver on the 91 Freeway; two men who witnessed a gang member attacking a woman and testified at trial; and a sea skipper who donated his time to help prosecutors undo a cold-case killer's alibi.

"Each of these individuals stepped into extremely difficult situations and remained dedicated to the pursuit of justice," District Attorney Lacey said. "Their actions were driven by a belief in doing the right thing, even when there was great pressure to do otherwise."

District Attorney Lacey recognized the four honorees this afternoon at a Courageous Citizen Awards luncheon hosted by the LA5 Rotary Club of Los Angeles.

The District Attorney's Office presents Courageous Citizen Awards several times a year to ordinary people who have performed extraordinary acts of selflessness in assisting in criminal prosecutions, aiding victims, preventing crimes, or capturing suspects.

The honorees are:

Hollie Bowers, 21, of Anaheim (Case no. VA138009)

On Jan. 5, 2015, a 59-year-old motorcyclist was driving home on the 91 Freeway in Cerritos when he was rear-ended by a drunken driver. The collision launched the victim airborne and he landed approximately 100 feet away from his motorcycle. Ms. Bowers, then a 19-year-old University of Southern California student, witnessed the collision and called 911. She got out of her car to assist the

injured motorcyclist. She spoke with him and then relayed his information to paramedics when they arrived. She also called the victim's wife to alert her about the crash. The victim later died from multiple injuries suffered in the collision. Ms. Bowers assisted prosecutors and even came to court to support the victim's wife, who she did not know prior to this crime, during the sentencing phase of the case.

On Feb. 9, 2016, the 33-year-old defendant pleaded no contest to a felony count of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and was sentenced to 15 years to life in state prison.

The case was investigated by the California Highway Patrol, Santa Fe Springs Station.

Mandeep Kumar, 33, and Robert Espina, 53, both of Los Angeles (Case no. BA438467)

Mr. Kumar was walking to dinner in Los Angeles' Westlake District on July 23, 2015, when he heard a woman scream. He ran toward the sound and saw a 21-year-old gang member standing over a woman as she cowered on the ground. Mr. Kumar demanded that the man leave the woman alone. Angry at Mr. Kumar's intervention, the man smashed a bottle and swung the broken glass at Mr. Kumar, slashing his arm. The assailant then threatened to kill Mr. Kumar. Police arrived and Mr. Espina approached the officers to report what he witnessed. He told police that the assailant was beating up a woman just before Mr. Kumar appeared. At great risk to themselves, both Mr. Kumar and Mr. Espina cooperated with the prosecution of the gang member and testified at trial.

On May 12, 2016, the defendant was convicted of several counts of assault and making criminal threats. He was sentenced to 10 years in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department, Rampart Division.

Charlie Abbott, 60, of San Pedro (Case no. YA075023)

A 28-year-old nurse was found murdered inside her Torrance apartment on the night of Aug. 29, 1979. Police suspected the victim's ex-boyfriend but he had an alibi: He said he was sailing. At the time, there was not enough evidence to charge anyone with the crime; the investigation became inactive. More than two decades later, Torrance police reexamined the case and on March 12, 2009, the ex-boyfriend was charged with the murder. Prosecutors needed an expert witness who could challenge the defendant's alibi. They found Mr. Abbott, a seasoned skipper. He donated an enormous amount of his time to the prosecution, conducting research and analyzing records. He also helped them understand, simplify and clearly explain to jurors the complex concepts of currents and wind conditions as well as weather patterns. With Mr. Abbott's assistance, prosecutors were able to thoroughly impeach the defendant's expert witnesses and devastate his alibi.

On Aug. 14, 2014, the jury convicted the defendant of first-degree murder and four months later he was sentenced to 26 years to life in prison.

The case was investigated by the Torrance Police Department.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.